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Conclusion Panel

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CONCLUSION

Why does an exhibit on imaging small, fast, or concealed objects end with a picture of space? This is because the challenges of choosing the correct sample to study, extrapolating and interpreting the necessary data, and forming a visually appealing, yet instructive image applies to everything from the nanoscale to the cosmic. Both scientists and artists cross disciplinary boundaries to learn from each other how to capture, interpret, and present visual data.

For centuries, scientists have tried to document the invisible world. Robert Hooke's *Micrographia*, Harold Edgerton's fast motion photography, and Marie Tharp's maps of the ocean floor all attempted to visualize what cannot be seen by the naked eye. Even though advances in technology have allowed scientists to manipulate data and produce images at the nanoscale, familiar questions still remain: How are you to convince people of the existence of things they cannot see? How much do scientists' aesthetic decisions affect how images are produced? And why we trust these images to be faithful representations of an invisible reality? As scientific images proliferate in the popular media, it is the public's responsibility to reflect on the nature of the visual world around them.

The Pinwheel Galaxy // *This image of a spiral galaxy was created by superimposing several images of the Hubble Space Telescope onto ground-based images taken at the Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope in Hawaii and at Kitt Peak National Observatory in Arizona. The final color image was assembled from individual exposures taken through blue, green, and red (infrared) filters // Courtesy of NASA, ESA, K. Kuntz (JHU), F. Bresolin (University of Hawaii), J. Trauger (Jet Propulsion Lab), J. Mould (NOAO), Y.-H. Chu (University of Illinois, Urbana), STScI; Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope/J.-C. Cuillandre/Coelum, G. Jacoby, B. Bohannan, M.Hanna/NOAO/AURA/NSF*